

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 04281 141906Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SAB-02 /062 W
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R 141730Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2357
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OVIP (THOMSON, MELDRIM)
SUBJECT: VISIT TO PANAMA OF GOV. MELDRIM THOMSON

REF: PANAMA 3850

1. GOVERNOR THOMSON'S VISIT TOOK PLACE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCHEDULE (REFTEL). IN ADDITION, ON JUNE 11 THE GOVERNOR TOOK A PARTIAL TRANSIT OF THE CANAL, TALKED WITH CANAL ZONE RESIDENTS AND WITH A SMALL GROUP OF U.S. BUSINESSMEN AND BANKERS. HE SPOKE AT LENGTH WITH FORMER PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FERNANDO ELETA AT DINNER AT THE CHARGE'S THAT EVENING. THE TRIP WENT SMOOTHLY AND THE GOVERNOR AND HIS PARTY WERE PLEASED WITH IT.

2. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED ERSA PRESS GAVE THOMSON'S VISIT A SPECIAL TREATMENT. IT WAS VIRTUALLY IGNORED IN THE NEWS COLUMNS; THERE WAS ONLY AN INSIDE WIRE-SERVICE STORY IN MONDAY'S "MATUTINO". MEANWHILE "CRITICA" ON MONDAY AND "MATUTINO" ON TUESDAY GAVE THE GOVERNOR ITS PATENTED ONE-TWO PUNCH OF POISON-PEN EDITORIALS.

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3. COVERAGE IN "ESTRELLA AND THE "STAR AND HERALD" WAS HEAVY AND PROMINENT. THE "STAR AND HERALD" PLAYED THE GOVERNOR'S COMINGS AND GOINGS AS LEAD OR SECOND STORY SATURDAY, SUNDAY AND MONDAY, CARRYING AP'S LENGTHY ARTICLES. "ESTRELLA" DUCKED THE STORY ON SUNDAY, BUT CARRIED IT IN LEAD POSITION SATURDAY AND MONDAY. CLIPPINGS FROM THE PAPERS ARE BEING SENT TO ARA/PAN GUTHRIE, FOR FORWARDING

TO GOV. THOMSON.

4. THE AP STRINGER FOLLOWED THOMSON AROUND THROUGH MUCH OF HIS VISIT AND CAME UP WITH A NUMBER OF QUOTES WHICH HAVE BUGGED SOME PANAMANIAN. (E.G., "YOU CAN'T BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE WITH A DICTATORSHIP, BE IT IN CUBA, JAMAICA OR PANAMA." ALSO, PANAMANIAN "MUST RECOGNIZE THAT IF THEY HAD NO CANAL, THEY WOULD BE IN A DESPERATE PLIGHT. WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO -- LIVE ON BANANAS AND SUGAR CANE?").

5. IN ADDITION, EITHER GOV. THOMSON OR AP MISQUOTED FOREIGN MINISTER GONZALEZ-REVILLA, WHO DID NOT, AS REPORTED, SAY THAT THE U.S. WOULD HAVE TO TAKE A RISK THAT PANAMA WOULD KEEP THE CANAL NEUTRAL. CHARGE WAS PRESENT AT THE GOVERNOR'S TALK WITH GONZALEZ-REVILLA, AND NO SUCH STATEMENT WAS MADE.

6. THOMSON SAID THAT CONGRESSMAN LARRY MCDONALD (D-GA.), THE "SHADOW CABINET'S" SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, WOULD VISIT PANAMA SOON.
GONZALEZ

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